



# SNEHAVAANI

NEWS LETTER OF SNEHAGRAM - CENTRE FOR VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND REHABILITATION OF CLHIV

## From the Director's Desk

As we bid adieu to the year 2014, Snehagram family looks back and give thanks to God and the all the people God sent to our campus for building the lives of our special children. It has been an amazing year of graces and blessings and we were touched by the generosity of many people. A genuine sign that it is God's work and we are joining Him in this mission of helping our children grow to become beautiful human beings. Few things we highlight in this issue of Snehavaani are the initiation of the OVC project with USAID and KHPT. Sneha Program will be a learning site for developing and sharing good practices so that we can improve the lives of children across the country. We have also blessed a new Chapel at the centre of our campus to remind us that GOD is at the "CENTRE" of our projects. Our new centre for vocational Training was also blessed and dedicated as the T.V. Vareed Memorial Learn for Life Centre. As these structures are in place now, we are slowly moving into the more serious work of BUILDING LIVES. Thank you for joining us and continue to journey with us as we welcome 2015. Blessings and Prayers.

Fr. Mathew Perumpil, MI  
Director

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## SPECIAL (USAID Project)

USAID has awarded a 3 year project to Karnataka Health Promotion Trust (KHPT) 'to increase access to priority health, educational, social protection and welfare services by children affected by HIV/AIDS (CABA)'. The target group for this project are children orphaned by HIV in the age group of 0 - 18 years. Sneha Charitable Trust (SCT) will be the Learning Site under this project with its two campuses in Snehacare Home, Bangalore and Snehagram, Nachikuppam, Krishnagiri, Tamil Nadu. Snehagram would extend its support and guidance through capacity building, experience sharing, facilitation of exposure visits, mentoring visits, and providing linkages to the vocational training programmes. Capacity building includes the training for Children, institutions and the staff of the institution providing care for the CABA. This Project is termed 'SPECIAL' which stands for Shelter, Protection, Education, Counselling, Innovation, Advocacy and Linkages.

## Leadership consultation

A 'Leadership Consultation' was conducted on 20 October 2014, at Snehagram campus, as a learning site initiative with a vision on 'empowered children enjoying a safe, supportive and responsive environment in a society that upholds the protection, rights and dignity of every child'. The emphasis is given on the involvement of children in designing, planning, implementing and monitoring programs that would reach them. Thus it was decided to ensure the involvement of children even in developing the operational guidelines. For this, the USAID OVC project team from KHPT, in association with INSA-India, Sneha Charitable Trust and Milana, Bangalore spent a day with Snehagram children to discuss and evolve a definition of 'Child leader'. The programme facilitated the children to define the term 'leadership' and to list out leadership qualities/traits and skills by themselves. The facilitators and staff of the organizations reviewed the leadership traits listed by the children. First, each of the sentences/phrases attributed by the children were summarised into single words that best described what they had expressed. The list of these words/terms is given below.



Leader		Follower/ Supporter
Understanding	Grateful	Listen
Happy	Motivator	Obey
Humble and kind	Active	Encourage
Role Model	Speaks politically correct	Cooperate
Courageous	Good analytical person	Trust
Accept everyone equally	Trustworthy	Respect
Helpful	Not rude	Help
Value-based	Not react as per the mood	Support
Encouraging/Facilitator	Not always an advisor	
Responsible	Not autocratic (take decisions alone)	
Punctual		
Cooperative		

The discussion then focused on the need to classify traits that are cognitive or attitudinal, and traits that require skills. Later, all agreed that the cognitive traits could be epitomised in one word 'role model'. The definition would include only the positive traits of 'role model'. Skills that would need to be enhanced were identified and inserted into the definition.

The prerequisites for a 'role Model' includes being as defined by children are the following:

- happy
- understanding and accepting everyone
- humble, kind and helpful
- punctual
- grateful
- trustworthy
- courageous, ready and active in assuming responsibility

The two essential skills that were identified for an effective leadership included

Facilitation skills like motivation, encouraging, speaking the right things at the right time and Analytical skills like problem identification and the ability to facilitate solutions.

After further discussions the team converged on the following definition:

**'A child Leader is a role model who analyses and facilitates actions for the well-being of children.'**

At the close of the programme it was decided to use the aforementioned definition by KHPT and its partner organizations as a guide for identification and development of the curriculum for training child leaders.

**Dhanunjaya Rao**  
Dy. Director, KHPT  
OVC SPECIAL Project

## News & Events

### Blessing of the St. Camillus Church at Snehagram

On 15 November 2014 our new church dedicated in the name of St. Camillus was blessed. Bishop Lawrence of Dharmapuri Diocese, in the presence of our dear Provincial Fr. Baby Ellickal and many of our confreres and supporters, blessed and dedicated this beautiful and simple church as the centre of our lives. St. Camillus Church was built with the generous support of our Anglo-Irish Province and C onfreres.





## Blessing and Dedication of Learn for Life Centre

The dream of building a Training Centre was realized with the help of the Province and the late Mr. T.V.Vareed, the father of jet engine design in India. The Training centre is named after this great visionary and engineer who showed the world how a small village boy can dream big and achieve great things in life. Mr. Thomas Thekkethala, son of Mr. T.V. Vareed, with Bishop Lawrence of Dharmapuri Diocese opened and dedicated the *Learn for Life Centre* at *Snehagram* for the vocational training of children on 29 December 2014 along with our Grammy Night celebrations. The centre can help students build various vocational skills to shape their future.



*The focus is on promoting self-directed learning, where the teacher's role is minimal and the students themselves plan their future and set the goals accordingly.*

By the establishment of *Learn for Life Centre* we aspire much beyond imparting vocational training. Here the students are expected to acquire all the required skills for life. The focus is on promoting self-directed learning, where the teacher's role is minimal and the students themselves plan their future and set the goals accordingly.

Self-directed learning would promote natural development of self-confidence, nurture their abilities in decision making and make them capable of taking initiatives. The absence of coercive schooling will induce increased life satisfaction. It also provides them opportunities to pursue wider interests and groom them to develop out-of-box thinking in life.

## Champion in Me 2014

'Champion in me' is an annual Arts & Sports Event for the children living with HIV which was launched in 2009. The aim of the event is to unearth the hidden talents of the children as well as to provide a platform for children to exhibit their competencies in arts and sports. The sixth edition of the event was conducted on 29 & 30 November 2014 on the Snehadaan Campus, Bangalore. Meena, a participant in the event, narrates her experience:



'Champion in me' was an opportunity for students for showing their talents. For the event 300 hundred other school students came to Sneha Care Home. On 29<sup>th</sup> we had arts competitions. To watch the performances was fantastic. While the programmes were proceeding we had a special lunch which everyone enjoyed. In the evening they announced prizes. One of my friends got a first prize in solo dance. I was so happy to see her getting a prize. I encouraged other school students too who had won prizes. Some of them have shared their experiences from their schools and I have eagerly listened to them. We Snehagram too won several prizes. On the next day, we had sports competitions. I was inspired at the sight of many differently abled children participating in the running competitions with good sportsman spirit. One of them fell four times while running but he did not give up. He got up every time after the fall and completed the run. I took part in the throw ball competition. It was a nice experience. From this I learnt the importance of cooperation and giving ears to the ideas of others.



## Grammy Night

The Christmas celebration at the Snehagram was termed *Grammy Night*. *Grammy Night* means 'Village Night'. It is the Christmas celebration at the Snehagram village. It is a time when we celebrate Christmas with the village people, children from Sneha Care home and other well-wishers. The event was held on 28 December 2014. It was a wonderful celebration with children from Sneha Care Home and many well-wishers from outside. The presence of our Bishop Lawrence Pius added more joy to the evening. We have presented many cultural programmes for the visitors. It was amazing. The thing that I and my friends enjoyed most was the colourful lights around the campus. It was very nice to be with the kids from the Sneha Care Home. I have learned from them how to be cheerful always. I enjoyed their company because I consider them as my brothers and sisters. I enjoyed the *Grammy Night* and the beautiful memories will be there forever in my mind



Ambika.

## Students' Corner

### LIFE OF A ROSE

When I was walking  
With a teacher, I asked  
How can I overcome from  
Problems  
And the teacher told the life is so tough.

The teacher showed me a rose  
By saying life neither  
A curse nor a punishment,  
But a rose filled with the beauty  
Of desire  
The thorns, painful lessons you  
Bring unto yourself, that you  
Might learn.

The tiny bud is your soul waiting  
To bloom with the truth  
Then leaves are those joys that enter  
Your life with the love.



### ONCE UPON A TIME

Once upon a time, my friends  
People were so good to each other  
They used to smile, talk and  
Wish with their hearts.

People were also seen as a family  
There were no caste  
Religion among anyone  
They were together by sharing and caring.

But now my friends  
The world is entirely changed  
They smile, talk and wish  
Without heart.

Now people divide themselves with caste  
And religion  
So my dear friends let's  
Turn the world to relearn the good things of the past.

Meena

## Volunteer Speaks

### My experience at snehagram



As I come to the end of my time here in India, I feel it is a good time to reflect on the past three months, and look forward to the future and my continued involvement with the school and other organisations like it. Having graduated in July and wanting to put off getting a real job for as long as possible, I travelled to India with not the faintest idea of what to expect. Of course, I had read books and seen programmes on India, but neither prepares you for the culture shock that awaits as soon as you get off the plane. India is a bizarre place for any traveller, a place that still shocks and surprises me now even though I have been here for months. But I have grown to love it, and I have grown to love the people, most especially the children that I have lived with and taught during my stay. Snehagram is the second phase of Sneha Care Home, a residential care facility for orphaned and partially orphaned children living with HIV. Children at Snehagram are aged between 13-15, and the school focuses on vocational training, such as tailoring, and rehabilitation of the adolescent children. Snehagram is located in a state called Tamilnadu, close to the Karnataka border, in a valley surrounded by beautiful mountains. Quite literally in the middle of nowhere! My role was to teach them Mathematics and English, which at first seemed an impossible task due to the big differences in abilities of the twenty-five children. Some were very able in their studies, while some had learning difficulties and even basic maths was a struggle. Eventually I taught them in smaller groups and really worked hard to adapt my teaching according to their needs. I hope that by the end they learned to like maths at least a little bit! My last month there was spent also teaching the higher group an introduction to business studies, a subject they may take for their 10th Exam, a qualification we hope most of them will achieve before they leave Snehagram. Children in India is very different to teaching children where I live. These children at Snehagram actually want to learn, are passionate and enthusiastic about widening their knowledge about lots of different subjects, particularly my life back in England – they never stopped asking questions about the weather, the people and my family! On reflection I've come to realise that the children taught me much more than I taught them. Whether it was the customs and traditions of their villages, the value of being positive and loving and helping others, or words of their native language, Kannada, my experience with them was rich in learning and understanding a world very different from the one I grew up in, and when I go home I'm sure I will miss them all very much. Volunteering at Snehagram will provide the children with a new view on life outside of the campus, outside of India, and will help them on their path to adulthood by developing various skills, whatever skills you have to offer! But what you will gain from volunteering at Snehagram is much more, and anyone that has some free time to spend or is looking for an adventure should come here for at least a little while, to see how you can change these children's lives or how they can change yours.

Kate Thompson



## Staff's Corner

### Blooming Buds in the Garden

Children are like buds in the garden. They should be carefully and lovingly pruned and nurtured for their future. Snehagram is a garden where many buds can bloom and be example for others. Especially these children who are away from home and affected by HIV. In each child there is potentiality to step out from darkness to brightness. Each of our children are gifted and blessed by god with many talents and abilities. They can be great persons of tomorrow. As we Snehagram family care these children, they need lots of love and support to come up in their life. We love them and nurture them with the human values for the bright future. I enjoy being with them and love to serve them. Mother Teresa said: "what you need to do is make sure that no one in your family goes unloved."



**Sr. Prasanta**

### A Home away from Home

Snehagram with its 44 adolescent children and staff is truly a home away from home. It is a great task taking care of adolescents in an institution, providing them all the care and support they need in these growing up years. People who manage the institution have to be parents in the real sense to these children if they have to grow up to be the bright future of the society. In my experience of living in Snehagram, the institution is striving very hard to reach that goal. The students here get love and care with necessary discipline and mentoring. It is amazing to see the children blooming from their childhood to adolescence with confidence, life skills and lot of love for one another. Children living here are from a very varied backgrounds from different geographical regions, different language, different culture and different upbringing. But all of them face one common issue of HIV. Hence each child needs to get individual attention which is also achieved to a great extent. Each one is being Oeducated according to her/his capacity to learn but all are being educated for life.



**Deepa Rose**

**Visit our website: [www.snehagram.org](http://www.snehagram.org)**

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